

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT ISSUED FOR SAN FRANCISCO BAY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposal to acquire approximately 23,000 acres in south San Francisco Bay to protect and preserve fish and wildlife and other natural values of the area is explained in a draft environmental impact statement issued recently.

Copies are available to the public by writing to Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Attn: Division of National Wildlife Refuges, Washington, D.C. 20240.

In 1972, Congress passed a law which directed action toward formation of the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Its primary objective would be to acquire and administer the area for the preservation and protection of critical habitat and associated wildlife including species known to be threatened with extinction, and to provide opportunity for wildlife-oriented recreation and nature study in the open space so preserved.

San Francisco Bay is one of the Nation's major estuaries, approximately 55 miles long, and ranges in width from 3 to 12 miles. Its watershed covers 3,500 square miles, while the 9-county bay area totals nearly 7,000 square miles.

The substantial fish and wildlife values of San Francisco Bay have long been recognized by resource agencies. In the 1960's, interest and concern for the future of the bay intensified in both the public and private sectors. Early in 1968, a cross-section of environmentally concerned

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citizens formed the South San Francisco Baylands Planning, Conservation, and National Wildlife Refuge Committee. The committee, which was formed to study the resources and problems of south San Francisco Bay, recommended the establishment of a national wildlife refuge as an important step in preserving remaining natural resources in this portion of the estuary.

High interest in and support for the refuge proposal ultimately resulted in the enactment of Public Law 92-330 on June 30, 1972. This Act authorized and directed the Secretary of the Interior to establish a refuge not to exceed 23,000 acres in south San Francisco Bay by June 30, 1977. Further, it authorized a refuge composed of four units (Mowry Slough, Fremont, Greco Island, and Alviso) and placed a ceiling of \$9 million on acquisition costs.

The purpose of the proposal is to:

(1) Preserve and maintain wildlife habitat necessary to support sizeable populations of migratory wildlife and indigenous fauna such as the harbor seal, terns, herons, egrets, stilts, avocets, and snowy plovers. Typical flora includes algae, diatoms, cordgrass, pickleweed, saltgrass, other grass, and coyote bush.

(2) Protect and enhance habitat for threatened species of wildlife. They include the salt marsh harvest mouse, California clapper rail, California least tern, brown pelican, and peregrine falcon.

(3) Provide opportunities for wildlife and ecological studies, environmental education, and wildlife interpretation. This would require development of programs and facilities to accommodate many of the hundreds of thousands of school children of the surrounding area. Walkways, contact stations, interpretive material, and staffing are included in concept planning.

(4) Maintain open space, open water, marsh, and tidal mudflats for public enjoyment. Habitat manipulation would be minor except in situations where reversion to natural marsh is feasible. Appropriate administrative and public facilities such as offices, roads, and trails are foreseen.

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